

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-14

NEW YORK TIMES
22 MARCH 1982

Letters

In Search of a Mole

To the Editor:

The New York Times and the rest of us frequently use the term "mole" to designate an agent who has infiltrated another country's intelligence service.

I did not know the origin of this term until, as editor of the World Affairs Report, I had the chore of reading a long Pravda survey of 1981. The theme was that the bastion of capitalist imperialism, the United States, is about to collapse. It ended quoting Marx quoting Shakespeare: "How well you gnaw, old mole!"

Indeed, Hamlet, in Act I, Scene V, did say to the ghost of his father as he disappeared under the ground, "Well said, old mole! can'st work i' the earth so fast?" And there was in the 60's a magazine called "The Old Mole," put out by Students for a Democratic Society.

In any case, "old mole" has become a Marxist cliché. The question is, where did Marx use this expression? No one out here knows.

Is there a molelogist among the readers of The Times?

RONALD HILTON

Stanford, Calif., Feb. 16, 1982